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**Public Health Committee Public Hearing
March 19, 2014**

Testimony on Raised Bill 438
An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers

Good afternoon Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Karin Nystrom, and I am here today to ask for your support for **Senate Bill 438, An Act Concerning Certification of Stroke Centers.**

Strokes can be a deadly disease and is certainly a most dreaded event. For every minute someone suffers a stroke, 1.8 million neurons are lost, leaving a previously normally functioning person with a potential plethora of physical and cognitive impairments. Stroke is no longer a disease of the elderly. Patients that present with stroke symptoms are younger and span both genders. Given that patients in their 40s and 30s are now living with risk factors for stroke, it is apparent that cerebrovascular disease has become a significant health concern across most age groups.

As a stroke coordinator of the state's largest tertiary care medical center and as an advanced practice nurse in a busy stroke program in southern New England, I have been extensively involved in developing standards and policies to comply with the Joint Commission's requirements for Primary Stroke Center and in caring for stroke patients and their families recovering from a stroke. Never has it been more crucial than now to consider the importance of mandating a consistent stroke system of care across our state. Once a stroke victim calls 9-1-1, they have the best chance for recovery when they are cared for by trained EMS personnel and an acute stroke team that are part of a standardized system of stroke care. This translates to ensuring an organized approach to training EMS in the recognition of stroke symptoms, ensuring the delivery of patients to an acute stroke ready facility, and offering those patients the highest standard of stroke treatment and care to optimize a full recovery.

CONCLUSION:

The need for a consistent stroke system of care across Connecticut has never been greater. Numerous studies have shown that acute and recovery stroke care can be enhanced when there is a system of care that has been certified as following national guidelines. Bill 438 will be the conduit through which stroke care can increase awareness, optimize treatment regimens, and reduce the burden of disability for patients, for families, and for communities in Connecticut. Many of our neighboring states have lead this charge. Connecticut needs to step up to the plate on this issue.

Thank you for consideration on this important matter.

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